LOK SABHA

Monday, August 4, 1997/Shravana 13, 1919 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Three Minutes past Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Promotion of Tourism from Gulf Countries

*161. SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is a wide scope for promotion of tourism in the country from the Gulf countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to increase the number of tourists in the country coming from the Gulf countries and the outcome thereof?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA) : (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There is wide scope for promotion of tourism in the country from the Gulf countries for the following reasons :-

(i) Gulf tourists are traditionally fond of India. Both the countries have age-old trade, cultural and historical links.

(ii) Gulf tourists travel mostly during summer months (April-June), which is India's off season. This also helps us to encourage hotel occupancy in the off-season and movement of summer traffic to various regions.

(iii) Gulf tourists consider that India provides value for their money.

(iv) The Gulf states are well connected by air from India and the time taken to reach India from the Gulf states is not much.

(v) The Gulf tourists are very fond of shopping and India offers an excellent opportunity for purchasing goods and services.

(c) A planned marketing and advertising strategy has been devised to increase the inflow of Gulf tourists to India utilising print and electronic media, providing publicity material in local language, targeting the potential travellers, extending support to tour operators and travel agents and organising seminars/conferences and through participation in tourism and travel fairs etc.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want your protection since my questions are related to the hon. Minister. I would like to know the number of tourists from the gulf countries to India during 1994-95 and 1995-96, places they liked to visit, steps taken by tourist department for the further development of historical, natural scenic and picturesque places of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh like Jhansi, Lalitpur, Tikamgarh and Chanderi and the amount allocated in the current financial year for the development of these tourist places?

[English]

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : Sir, from the Gulf countries, the figures for 1994-95...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Mr. Minister, Sir, you can speek in Hindi.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Why do you make that suggestion when we have translation facility?

[Translation]

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : The number of tourists in 1994 is 1,31,690 in 1995, 1,30,175 and in 1996 it is 1,02,918. The percentage of tourists decreased because of Ayodhya incident and Mumbai bomb blast. It is gradually picking up. So far as the promotion of Gulf is concerned, they have India as the target area because during rainy season, more and more people want to see India for shopping. They are high spenders and their infrastructure is good. Besides, language-wise, they are close to India. They have good air-link from these countries. Therefore, they want to visit India, specially Mumbai and Goa. Since they have no train service in their country, they are very much attracted to see and travel by train. We are chalking out package for rainy season when they have summer season in their countries. So far one lakh...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Mr. Minister, please consider my question.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : It was previously one lakh thirty thousand, then two lakh and now we are targetting five lakh. Therefore, detailed package and programmes are being started from this year.

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was not my question. I wanted to know names of the places liked by them and the plans chalked out by the Government for the development of historical places and places of scenic beauty and picturesque spots of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh like Jhansi, Lalitpur, Tikamgarh and Chanderi and the amount allocated during the current financial year?

[English]

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : Sir, I fully agree with the hon. member that beautiful locations and destinations in and around Jhansi can be connected. The Defence Minister is also suggesting that Jhansi can be one point, where the nature's beauty is there. We can improve that, provided we get the support from the State Government...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Please let us know as to what the Government proposes to do? You may enquire the hon. Defence Minister about the number of historical places which abound in scenic beauty. I seek your sympathy and assurance.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : Please give your suggestions and the Government of India will do whatever is possible.

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, whether the hon. Minister is aware that the decrease in the number of Gulf tourist is due to adverse conditions prevailing in these areas, such as dirt and filth around Tajmahal, moisture in Ajanta-Ellora caves, criminal activities between Goa and Quillon, Drug-peddling in Pushkar and increasing pollution in lakes. In addition, how many seminars to attract the Gulf tourists and the tourists from other countries have been organised in India during 1995-96 and 1996-97? What are the major decisions that have been taken in these seminars and the details of co-ordination set up with world tourist organisations.

[English]

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : So far as Taj Mahal, and other tourist places in the surrounding areas are concerned.

[Translation]

You are saying that the dirt and filth is increasing in the surrounding areas. For this purpose, if the State Government and local municipality pays proper attention towards the tourism, the prevailing situation can be changed.

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Sir, what is your responsibility in this regard?

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : The Union Government can provide financial assistance, literature and extend suggestions but it has to be implemented by the local authority.

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : But what would you like to state about the monuments under Archaelogical Survey of India?

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : So far as Archaelogical Survey of India is concerned, we write letters to this department for the proper maintenance of the monuments and if the monuments are surrounded by filth, tourists would not like to visit these places. Besides, you have asked as to what has been done for promoting tourism in Gulf countries and the number of seminars held in this regard. As I have told earlier, we are holding meetings through our Dubai based regional office of the director for the promotion of Tourism and organising exhibitions.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : You cannot enter into an argument during the Question hour.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question is that what steps the Government propose to take to check the narcotics peddling in Pushkar and pollution near Ajanta and Ellora...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : No. Not allowed. Mr. Minister, you answer to the first supplementary and then finish it off. The Member cannot enter into an argument like this in the Question Hour.

[Translation]

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : I have recently held a meeting of our overseas officers since we have a target to attract still more tourists from the Gulf countries to India. We have more than two hundred air routes for Gulf countries.

[English]

That means, we are well connected with the air activity so far as the Gulf is concerned. Our office at Dubai is promoting and participating in different tourism activities there. They are attracting the tourists and giving literature to them. They are promoting tourists to go to India in a big way because generally the attraction of the tourists is more towards Europe than India. But in the Southeast Asia, India comes first as far as the Gulf is concerned. Their choice is India. But in India also, we have to take a little care of them because they want to spend money and they also want a little comfort. They want to see rains, particularly in Bombay, Goa and Sindhdurg. They want to see rainfalls and come to see rains. We are trying our best in that direction.

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Through you, I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister. This is regarding Jaisalmer town. The town is on the world map, especially the Fort, which can be called the Eighth Wonder of the World.

What is happening is, tourism is neglected there. There is no proper hotel, though now Mr. Jaswant Singh is constructing it, yet that is also only three-star hotel. What is happening is, because the people there are very poor, they cannot construct hotels. There is no flight also.

Through you, I want to draw the attention of the Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Civil Aviation ...*(Interruptions)* There was a question about four days back and he said that he would be considering it this Winter. But already time is running out and nothing is coming. For constructing hotels also, they are not doing anything.

As mentioned here, Gulf tourists come during April-June. During that time, the temperature shots up to 52 to 55 degree Celsius. So, air-conditioned hotels should come. Galore of tourists, especially from the Gulf countries want to come to this place. But nothing has been done. As you know, this is a desert and underdeveloped district. But nothing has been done.

I want to know, through you, whether the Minister would like to give some assurance to the House for promoting tourism there.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : As you know, of late, Jaisalmar Fort is really coming up as one of the most important tourist attractions and the foreign tourists are more attracted to that particular location.

Recently, Taj Group, ITC Group and Oberoi Group have been allotted lands to construct hotels there. So far as the flight is concerned, Indian Airlines has agreed to give air connection to that site. I am sure, it will take another three to four years. But ultimately the private industries and private groups are coming up for five-star hotels around Jaisalmer Fort.

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Sir, politics are being played about the flight going to Jaisalmer.

Will the hon. Minister give an assurance; because there are some people with vested interests who want the flights to go to Jodhpur so that occupancy rate in hotels at Jodhpur goes up?

MR. SPEAKER : The Minister has already given an assurance. Hon. Minister, do you want to give a second assurance?

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : I will certainly pass it on to the hon. Minister of Civil Aviation.

SHRI P.S. GADHAVI : Sir, in reply to this question, the hon. Minister has given all the reason why the Gulf countries are traditionally fond of India. We have age-old trade, cultural and historical links with the Gulf countries.

In this respect, I would like to inform the hon. Minister that Gujarat, particularl the Kutch region, has age-old trade, historical and cultural relations with the Gulf countries.

In Gujarat, there are so many tourist spots, like Gir Forests, etc. and in Kutch, there are so many potentialities, like sea beaches etc. which can be exploited. Just recently, signs of 5000 year old Harappan culture have been found in Dhaula Veera. But to develop this area, there are no infrastructural facilities provided by the Government. There is no daily airlink to Kutch, though there is an airlink between Kutch and Mumbai for the last so many years, but that too is only four times a week. There should be a direct daily flight between Gulf countries and Ahmedabad and there should be a daily flight between Mumbai and Kutch.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister what steps he is going to take to develop that area and what infrastructural facilities he is going to provide in Gujarat. I would also like to know from the hon. Minister, in coordination with the Minister of Civil Aviation what he is proposing to do for develpment of infrastructural facilities at Dhaula Veera.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : Sir, so far as Gujarat, particularly the Kutch area of Gujarat, is concerned, the potentiality is there but it has not been so far exploited properly. To exploit it properly and to link it with the Gulf countries and other areas, the State Government's role is also equally very important.

Regarding air connectivity, though Ahmedabad has been declared as an international airport, I think, the Gulf airlines do come to Ahmedabad and I think the Civil Aviation Minister...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.S. GADHAVI : These flights are not coming daily.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA : I will send that suggestion to the Civil Aviation Ministry.

But so far as development of infrastructural facilities, like hotels, etc., are concerned, the State Government has to come up with a different policy there.

Recently, I had a meeting with the hon. Chief Minister of Gujarat and I am told that he was taking keen interest to develop that particular area so that tourism can be developed.

[Translation]

L.P.G. Connections

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*162. DR. ARVIND SHARMA :
SHRI NARENDRA BUDANIA :

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have taken a decision